

I think it is unconscionable that in cities every day somebody gets hit by a car and has to go to an emergency room and has to drive by the nearest one to one, two, or three down the way because that's the one covered by the plan. I think it is wrong for a person working for a small business who has cancer and is in the middle of chemotherapy, or who is pregnant and having a difficult pregnancy, to have to change their doctor in the middle of the treatment because the employer has changed his coverage.

Why? It doesn't affect me. I'm the President; I have great health care. It doesn't affect you. Most of you have got—you can pay for whatever you need. So why are you here? Because we feel that our country is better if more people are healthy and if people are treated fairer.

I'll give you another example—it may not be popular in all parts of Colorado. I grew up in a State where half the people had a hunting or fishing license or both. But I think that we did the right thing to pass the Brady bill. I think we did the right thing to pass the assault weapon ban. And I think Dianne Feinstein did the right thing to pass the assault weapons ban and then keep trying to close all the loopholes in it.

Why is that? Because I think—not because I don't think people ought to be able to hunt or go to sporting events, but because I think that all of us ought to be willing to make reasonable compromises for the safety of the society as a whole, just like we do when we walk through an airport metal detector. You know, it didn't take too many planes to be hijacked before nobody screamed anymore when they walked through an airport metal detector, "You are interfering with my constitutional right to travel."

Now, think about it. This is crazy. So look at the fight in Washington. All of them, from the candidates to the Congress, were against closing the gun show loophole. We don't do background checks at gun shows and urban flea markets where a lot of criminals buy guns, and we have the technology to do it with very minor inconvenience. We think we should do it. And I think it is unconscionable that we would run the risk that one person would lose his or her life next year because we don't do that.

We're for the employment nondiscrimination act, and we're for hate crimes legislation. And we believe that it ought to specifically mention no discrimination against people because of sexual orientation. And we're not afraid of that.

Now, why is that? Because we think all law-abiding citizens ought to be part of America's community. Now, so I ask you, when you think about what we're doing in Washington now and the politics of the next year and a half, and if people ask you why you're here—in Colorado a lot of people would say you're nuts; they'd say, "Don't you understand," if you'd go to a Republican fundraiser, "that you'd get a great tax cut right now? Why are you here?"

Tell them because the country is better off, because we changed the direction of the country, and you want America to go forward into the new century together.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Dianne Feinstein's husband, Richard Blum, who cohosted the picnic; Representative Mark Udall's wife, Margaret L. Fox; former Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado, general chair, Democratic National Committee, and his wife, Bea; and USA Today journalist Susan Page.

Remarks on the Death of King Hassan II of Morocco and an Exchange With Reporters in Aspen

July 24, 1999

The President. Let me again offer my condolences to the family of His Majesty King Hassan of Morocco and to the people of Morocco. As all of you know, Hillary and I are going to the funeral. His Majesty was a friend of the

United States for a very long time and a friend of the Middle East peace process. He also worked very hard to reconcile the differences among the Moroccan people, within Morocco, and therefore, to set an example of the kind

of thing that all of us should be doing and certainly there should be more of in the Middle East.

He was particularly gracious to Hillary and other members of our family. And after she went to see him recently, Morocco once again manifested its friendship to the United States by standing with us on human rights issues in ways that had not been the case before.

So I feel very, very grateful that the United States had a partner and friend like King Hassan, and I considered him a personal friend. And I am grateful for the many kindnesses he extended to me and to our family. And so I'm looking forward to going to Morocco for the funeral and to seeing the new King. I talked with him on the phone; I wished him well. We had met before, and I have high hopes for our continuing successful endeavors for both his partners and for the peace process.

President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria

Q. Do you expect to meet with King Asad while you're there?

The President. With President Asad from Syria?

Q. President Asad, yes, I'm sorry.

The President. No, it's okay. I don't know yet whether he is coming; I don't know who all is coming. But I will be on the ground for a few hours, as all of you know. We'll have to stay, I think, 5 hours after the service is over, and so I'll have an opportunity to see a number of people, and I'll do what I can to make the best use of the time. And as soon as I know with whom I'll be meeting, I'll let you know. I just don't know yet.

Morocco and the Middle East Peace Process

Q. Is this part of a changing of the guard, sir, in the Middle East, between King Hussein and the elections?

The President. Well, there is some change. You know, some of it is the rhythm of politics, and some of it is the rhythm of life. King Hussein and King Hassan both had health problems and had had long and distinguished tenures. And that happens, you know. Everybody's time runs out. Mine does, too.

But I think the important thing is that Morocco has been a model of reconciliation within the country and a model of partnership and friendship for peace in the Middle East. And I think that direction will continue. That's the really important thing for me, that this change be a positive thing for the people of Morocco and for the people of the region. And I'm going to do everything I can to be a good friend to the new King and to the country.

Press Secretary Joe Lockhart. Thank you very much.

The President. Thank you.

Michael Jordan

Q. Who told you you were Michael Jordan?

The President. One of my Republican friends was being crude. That's what I said to him. I said no one in their right mind could compare me to Michael Jordan. Well, he said, "I meant it only in the political context." [Laughter] I said, "I can't jump 4 inches. I have a vertical jump of about 4 inches."

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to King Mohammed VI, successor to King Hassan II; and former NBA Chicago Bull Michael Jordan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Luncheon in Aspen
July 24, 1999

Thank you. Thank you very much. Well, first of all, I'm sorry that there's some people out there under umbrellas. I'm tempted to say, thank you very much; we're right; they're wrong; thanks for the money; go out and work hard;

goodbye. [Laughter] But what the heck. [Laughter]

I'd like to thank all the Members of Congress and the members of the administration who are here, and all the people from the DNC. I'd